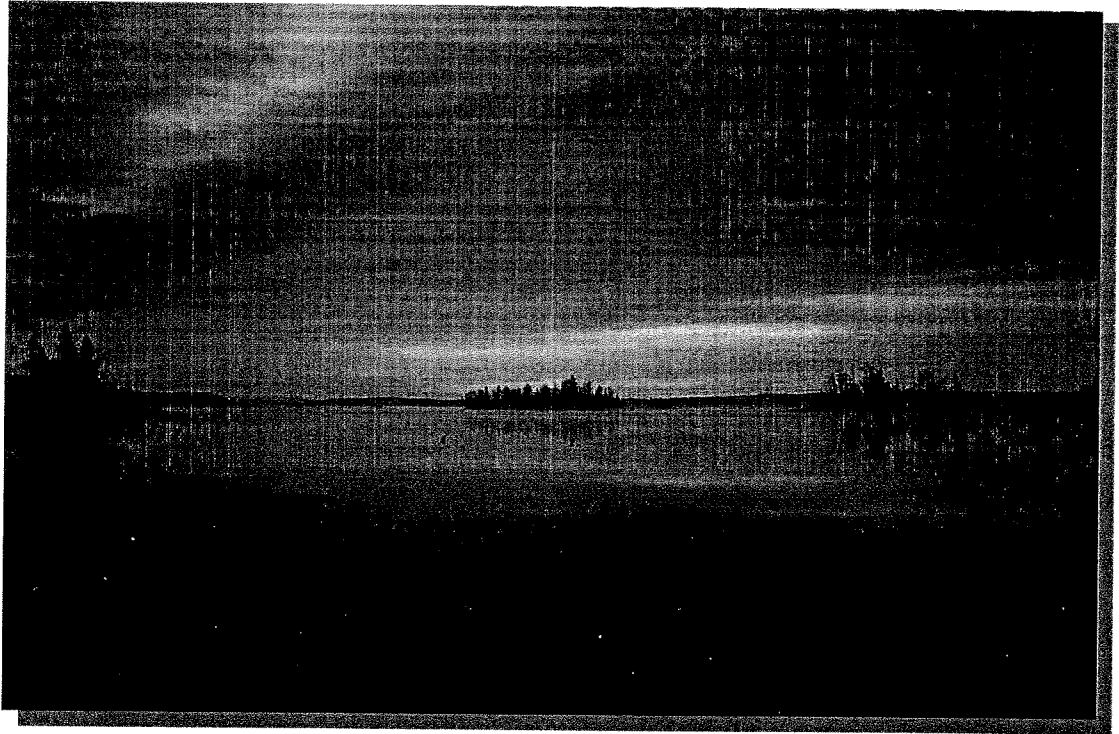


# **GILE FLOWAGE WATERSHED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN-PHASE I**



*Gile Flowage Sunrise*

**WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LAKE PLANNING GRANT  
LPL-900-04**

**SUBMITTED JOINTLY BY THE  
TOWN OF CAREY AND THE TOWN OF PENCE  
IRON COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

**DECEMBER, 2004**

# **GILE FLOWAGE WATERSHED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN-PHASE I**

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*as per Lake Planning Grant Agreement*

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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Lake Planning Grant

LPL-900-04

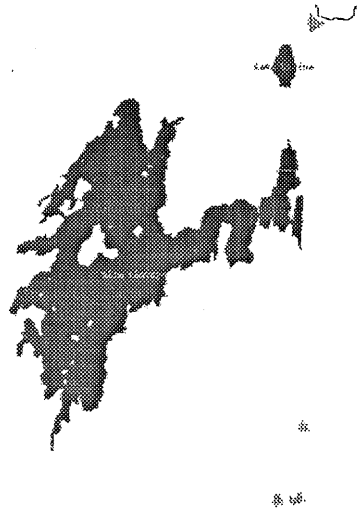
In partnership with the  
Towns of Carey and Pence  
Iron County, Wisconsin

Gile Flowage Watershed Comprehensive Plan-Phase I

## **GILE FLOWAGE SHORELAND ASSESSMENT**

Conducted by the Ashland-Bayfield-Douglas-Iron County  
Land Conservation Department

Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, & Iron Counties  
Land & Water Conservation Department



Gile Flowage  
Iron County, Wisconsin  
Recommendations for Shoreland Protection

## INTRODUCTION:

The Gile Flowage is a 3,400 acre flowage located in northern Iron County, Wisconsin. It lies within the Lake Superior watershed and is classified as a Class 1 lake in Iron County. This categorization has the least restrictive requirements for shoreland setbacks and lot sizes.

The Gile Flowage was created in 1941 when the West Branch of the Montreal River was dammed at Gile to supply a water reserve for hydroelectric power generation. From its creation it has remained a relatively pristine water resource. It is one of the last undeveloped water bodies in northern Wisconsin that is not under state, private, or conservancy ownership. Unlike most northern lakes, at night most of its shoreline is dark without obtrusive shoreland lighting or even signs of development.

The watershed is home to several endangered/threatened species including bald eagles, timber wolves, and migrating trumpeter swans. Introduction of smallmouth bass have increased the fishing industry. This has created more high-powered boats and opened the avenue for invasive species. The factors that have maintained its pristine character are rapidly changing due to development, lot size decreases, recreation, etc.

Prior to 2003, The Gile Flowage was not represented by a lake association, lake monitoring group, LoonWatch, or any other lake interest group. Therefore, concerns about protecting the flowage have arisen, and on July 5, 2003 a group of interested citizens met to determine the level of interest in forming a lake association. As a result, the Friends of the Gile Flowage (FOG) lake association was formed.

Both the towns of Carey and Pence that encompass the Flowage, recognize the need to develop a lake management plan for the Gile Flowage and its watershed as a key component through a comprehensive land use plan. This management plan will help to ensure the protection of the Flowage and its valuable resources for generations to come.

## PROJECT:

In reaction to recognizing the need for protection of the Flowage and its resources through comprehensive planning, a grant was written to gather information and start the planning process. The Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, & Iron Counties Land and Water Conservation Department<sup>1</sup> (ABDI-LCD) was asked to provide support by conducting an on-site inspection of the entire Gile Flowage shoreline.

The purpose of the inspection was to identify shoreland protection issues and potential areas for restoration. This was completed on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Diane Daulton and MaryJo Gingras from the Land and Water Conservation Department assisted Cathy Techtmann, Gile Flowage Lake Planning grant manager and President of FOG and

Harold Schmude-FOG volunteer, to conduct a shoreland assessment of the Gile Flowage by watercraft.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS/ASSESSMENT:

As previously mentioned, the Gile Flowage is one of the last undeveloped water bodies in northern Wisconsin. Most of the shoreline is undeveloped and has layers vegetation including groundcover, shrubs, and tree canopy. In addition, Xcel Energy owns approximately 60% of the land adjacent to the Flowage and has maintained the natural landscape. Although a majority of the shoreline is in its natural state, there are some protection issues and several sites in which the shoreland could be restored.

#### **Protection Recommendations:**

In order to preserve and protect the resources of the Gile Flowage, it is recommended by the ABDI-LCD that additional environmental information should be gathered. This information could include:

- recreational interests  
A survey of local residents and resource users could provide valuable information, including level of interest for resource protection.
- aquatic native & invasive plant surveys  
Inventories of native and invasive aquatic plants could be conducted by a local interest group, private citizen, or a natural resource agency such as the Department of Natural Resources. These surveys could provide a base for future monitoring and indicate a need for control and management.
- terrestrial native & invasive plant survey  
Inventories of native and invasive terrestrial plants could be conducted by a local interest group, private citizen, or a consultant. These surveys would provide a base for future monitoring, a list of native plants that could be used in restoration projects, and could indicate if there is a need for control and management.
- survey shoreland owners interests in aesthetic value & privacy  
A survey of shoreland owners interest in aesthetic value and privacy concern could provide valuable information to be used for lake management planning or when writing the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

#### **Shoreland Assessment:**

The Land Conservation Department completed an assessment of the entire Gile Flowage to inspect the existing shoreline buffer. A shoreline buffer is the area of land adjacent to a lake or river that is vegetated with a diverse mix of native plants including grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees. It starts in the water and extends inland from the water on to the land. In Iron County, landowners must maintain at least a 35' wide buffer on any

new development. In addition, restoration is encouraged on any site that does not have at least a 35' buffer, and the larger the buffer, the more water quality protection.

The Department used various indicators within the buffer to locate potential areas for shoreland restoration. These indicators include:

- Buffer width  
Does the site appear to have at least a 35' wide buffer? (Remember this inspection was conducted from the water)
- Exposed soil  
Does the site contain exposed soil that could create erosion concerns?
- Missing layers of riparian buffer vegetation or a maintained lawn  
Is a layer of vegetation missing on site (i.e. groundcover, shrub, canopy)?
- Erosion  
Is erosion present?  
Is there a moderate or steep slope that may cause erosion concerns?

By using these tools, 8 sites were targeted for potential shoreland habitat restoration projects. All 8 sites contain inadequate vegetation necessary to serve as a buffer in filtering runoff before entering the Flowage. Most of sites lack groundcover, few sites also lack adequate shrub and canopy layers, and a couple sites have exposed soil. Although erosion did not appear to be a problem from the water, each property should have a site inspection done. The Land Conservation Department recommends contacting these landowners to encourage them to voluntarily restore their shore.

The recommendations include 3 adjacent sites on the Northwest side of the flowage in Section 4, one site at the North end in Section 34, 2 sites on the Northeast shore in Section 2, and 2 sites on the Southeast side in Section 10. (See attached plat map)

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<sup>1</sup> The Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, & Iron Counties' Land and Water Conservation Department works with communities and private landowners to provide leadership and promote sound land and water stewardship through education and technical support. The Department's primary focus is to reduce erosion and improve water quality.



Gile Flowage Watershed Comprehensive Plan-Phase I

## **GILE FLOWAGE WATERSHED BASE PLANNING MAPS**

Provided by Northwest Regional Planning Commission

*Note: the maps are too large to include in this report but include the following:*

*Gile Flowage Watershed Land Use Map*

*Gile Flowage Watershed Contour Map*

*Gile Flowage Watershed Elevation Map*

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From: "Candice Kasprzak" <ckasprzak@nwrpc.com>  
To: "Catherine A. Techtmann" <catherine.techtmann@ces.uwex.edu>

Cathy,

Here are the pdf files. They are set up to print at 11x17. Good luck with everything. You should be getting the copy maps by the end of this week.

Candi

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[gile elev.pdf](#)



[gile contour.pdf](#)

Gile Flowage Watershed Comprehensive Plan-Phase I

# **REVIEW OF EXISTING GILE FLOWAGE WATERSHED LAND USE REGULATIONS**

Provided by Northwest Regional Planning Commission



**Snapshot of Current  
Shoreland Zoning Regulations Affecting  
The Gile Flowage Watershed**

- 1) The Gile Flowage is a Class One Lake according to the Iron County Lake Classification System.
- 2) Class One Lakes have a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet + 200 ft. of width at the water's edge
- 3) Some Zoning Districts require larger lot sizes. In addition, some smaller lots created before 1998 may be buildable.

**NOTE:**

**Xcel Energy Corporation owns and/or controls most of the Gile Flowage shoreline to the elevation of 1495 ft. Contact Xcel Energy for more information**

**Individual owning property adjacent to Xcel property may not be considered riparian property owners**

*For more information see Iron County "Shoreland Owner's Guidellines For Buyers and Builders in Iron County, Wisconsin- attached*